

Overweight? Why it may not be your fault

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Travellers' glee as judge halts closure of illegal site at 11th hour

FIASCO DOWN ON EVICTION FARM

By Paul Harris and Andrew Levy

IT may have been the travellers' last stand, but it was no one's finest hour.

In scenes bordering on farce, the eviction of Dale Farm began with an all-day stand-off and ended with yet another legal hitch in a local council's efforts to clear Europe's largest illegal site.

On one side were protesters and travellers insisting they shall not be moved.

On the other, bailiffs and a small platoon of blue-uniformed officials spouting health and safety concerns through a loudhailer that didn't work.

But this long-awaited first stage in the Battle of Basildon was abruptly halted yesterday when a judge sitting 50 miles away granted a last-gasp injunction to delay further action.

Now the operation to clear the site has been put on hold until at least the end of the week after Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart ruled at the High Court in London that the proposed measures 'may go further' than the terms of the enforcement notices.

Basildon Council was thrown into disarray last night as its lawyers scrambled to read through the injunction. Leader Tony Ball hurriedly left a television interview for an urgent briefing.

He didn't explain the ruling when he returned to give a brief statement an hour later but said he was 'extremely disappointed and frustrated' by the decision.

He added: 'The motion was put forward to the High Court without notice, which meant the judge only had one side of the story and therefore has given the council until Friday to go back to the High Court to make its argument.'

'I am absolutely clear that, in this issue



Celebration: Two travellers dance with delight at news of the injunction yesterday

£3m offer to Milly's family over hacking

MILLY Dowler's family are considering a £3million offer of compensation over the phone hacking scandal.

Negotiations with the publishers of the News of the World are said to be at an advanced stage.

The murdered 13-year-old's parents Bob and Sally and sister Gemma would receive £2million personal damages with a further £1million going to charity, paid by Rupert Murdoch from his own pocket.

The Dowlers' lawyers were said to be holding out for a total package of £3.5million, but publishers News International said an agreement is expected within days.

The figure is far more than the family could have expected if the case had gone to court, possibly reflecting Mr Murdoch's distress when he was told that Milly's phone had been hacked following her murder by Levi Bellfield. Criminal Injuries compensation would have been a maximum £11,000.

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10-year wait then

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on Friday, the court will find in the council's favour and the clearance will be able to continue.

The latest twist came as it was revealed that the travellers on the site at Crays Hill in Essex have been offered a total of 38 local authority homes to move from the site. Basildon Council has suggested a variety of temporary flats and houses over the past six months in an effort to resolve the decade-long stand-off.

But they were turned down for reasons including because they smelled of smoke or were made of bricks and mortar, 'contravening' the travellers' desire to spend their life on the road.

A council spokesman said yesterday's injunction provided a 'blanket ban against the removal of any and all property' from the illegal camp.

A source later said they believed it might refer to the High Court order earlier this year which

Traveller families were even offered council homes to leave illegal site

stated the eviction could go ahead and the concrete driveways, 'hard standings', the caravans stand on could be removed. The source added they understood this failed to refer to fences and some other structures on the hard-standings, creating a legal loophole.

News of the injunction brought whoops of delight from travellers and supporters. One, who gave her name as Mary, said: 'Thank God for British Justice.' The travellers and troublemak-

ers had manned the ramparts of their barricade from before dawn as police, the local council and bailiffs set up camp beside the main entrance.

Fifty-one plots containing homes built without planning permission are set to be cleared from the six-acre site, along with their remaining residents, in an operation which could cost £18million.

Like opposing armies, the two sides emerged into daylight in different uniforms - the authorities a mixture of orange, yellow and blue, versus the travellers' preference for track suits. For hours yesterday they could be seen making their separate preparations for war.

And every sign was that this is going to be a long campaign.

If anyone needed confirmation, it came with the arrival of a stout traveller humping a consignment of supplies towards the gate. About 200 rolls of toilet paper in jumbo packs were pushed through a gap in the barricade to eager waiting hands. The delivery was followed by supplies of high carbohydrate and energy foods such as crisps, peanuts and Bourbon Creams.

Nearby, a traveller in a distinctive white homburg was holding court with reporters. 'Don't give them your name, Eamonn,' a woman shouted from behind. One traveller who gave his name as Michael added: 'We have got to take a stand. If we don't, this will just carry on with other traveller com-

Lentil stew and hatred among the rag-tag anarchists

By Arthur Martin
with protesters at Dale Farm

THEY claim it is a cause close to their hearts - one for which they have left their daily lives to chain themselves to the barricades at Dale Farm to put right a perceived injustice.

But after successfully infiltrating the anarchists at Europe's largest illegal traveller site, I saw a very different picture emerge.

During animated discussions with fellow comrades over bowls of lentil stew by the camp fire, the plight of the 400 travellers who face eviction was rarely mentioned.

Instead, the rag-tag mix of professional activists, benefit claimants and students had just one thing on their minds: Anarchy.

Indeed, a slogan crudely written in blue paint on a wicker fence which surrounds the protesters' headquarters aptly sums up their feelings. It reads: 'Vandalism: beautiful as a rock in a balliff's face'.

As I struggled to maintain the pretence that I was one of these hate-filled anarchists, we were split into different groups to be briefed by our team leaders. I listen with growing alarm as mine attempts to whip us into a fervour of hate against the bailiffs and the police.

Members of the 'red team' donned blue boiler suits and white masks to mark themselves out as the crack squad among the protesters. This brigade are the seasoned anarchists who will spend days chained to the front gate of the site.

One told me that the hard-core group push themselves to greater extremes as a sign of their commitment to anarchy. All had bicycle chains around their wrists. Others had safety harnesses, usually used for mountaineering, to clip themselves onto the barricades.

Aware they face almost certain arrest, many proudly asked their comrades to write the name and number of their solicitor on their arms in indelible ink.

The rest of the mob were divided into blue, yellow and green teams who will protect the other sections of the camp.

One female student told me she had joined the blue team because there was less chance of being arrested and consequently harming her future job prospects.

During my time in the camp it became clear that many of the activists had never met each other before.



'You have been warned - leave the site or the LibDem conference will be transmitted live on the giant screen behind me'

munities. Other families complained they had nowhere else to go - an argument weakened by the discovery that some have luxury homes back in Ireland.

Their resistance, which has received support from the UN, Vanessa Redgrave and the Bishop of Chelmsford, is in defiance of officials who insist they are breaking the law.

A woman dressed as a witch took up position with a walkie-talkie to a look-out platform on the ramparts.

'They're coming!' someone shouted, and all eyes turned towards a cluster of hard-hatted bailiffs being escorted by police towards the blocked gate. Protesters fired four bombs and distributed missiles as they advanced, pageant-like, up the main approach.

From here, the platoon leader expressed health and safety concerns about the barricade, straining now under the weight of opposing forces.

A sign on the outside said a woman had secured herself to the gate by a noose - and warned that if it was forced open, she would be killed. Shouts of 'racists' drowned out most of the bailiff's remaining words, and cheers accompanied his retreat.

Had his megaphone been working, the travellers might have heard him saying something about trying to resolve the stand-off swiftly and peacefully. Yesterday, neither outcome looked likely.

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On the ramparts: Protesting traveller women stand side by side at one of the gates to Dale Farm yesterday

DANGER OF DEATH

BEHIND THIS GATE A WOMEN IS ATTACHED
BY HER NECK. IF YOU ATTEMPT TO OPEN
THIS GATE YOU WILL KILL HER.



Death threat: Just behind this warning sign one of the activists waits with a bicycle lock around her neck

Among them is a tubby Mancunian called Steve who tried to endear himself to his new comrades with daft impressions of a possum. When asked what he did for a day job, he said proudly: 'I'm a professional activist.'

Then there were the bright Left-wing students arguing passionately about

'Doing their dirty work'

their desire to bring down capitalism and 'replace it with something better'.

At times order was brought to the camp by self-imposed leaders - ardent feminists in their 40s.

The camp would not be complete without a celebrity. Step forward Johnny Marbles, the comedian who launched a foam pie attack on Rupert

Murdoch in July. This criminal act gave him cult status as he walked into Camp Constant - the activists' HQ - yesterday.

Sitting next to Mr Marbles - real name Jonathan May-Bowles - was his girlfriend, who admitted she had no interest in the issues behind the eviction. 'I'm here for the protest,' she said. 'I don't give a **** about the travellers.'

At least 20 of the 200 activists claimed they had come to Dale Farm to try to record evidence of brutality by the police or bailiffs. However, a 15-minute briefing by one of the 'legal team' dispelled the notion that this was a worthy venture.

As a human rights student handed out fluorescent yellow bibs with the words 'legal observer' on them, he told his team: 'You are not neutral. You are on the side of the protesters. You are here to photograph and bear witness to excessive behaviour by the

police and the bailiffs. You should not write down any criminal acts committed by the protesters. And if you take photos of the protesters committing illegal acts you should delete them so that they cannot be used in evidence against them.'

The anarchist operation is big. For weeks a dedicated kitchen team has been feeding a growing army three cooked meals a day.

All protesters, regardless of their beliefs, are fed generous ladles of vegan food from huge vats of food.

In the past two weeks the travellers have been happy to take a step back and let the seasoned protesters take over their fight.

As one insider put it: 'The travellers like getting others to do their dirty work, but they really can't believe their luck this time.'

No wonder travellers keep grinning ear to ear every time I walk past them.



Defiant: Traveller girls show their delight at the injunction